

BEHIND COVER OF 'RESTORATION' OF DEMOCRACY THEY ALL STRENGTHEN THE POLICE SYSTEM

Among the features underlining the basic identity in outlook and attitude of the present Governments at the States and Centre the keen concern for the upkeep and modernisation of the police force is particularly revealing. All these Governments—no matter the political vocabulary of the ruling parties and the colour of their flag—have been increasing the expenditure in the police account every year and arming it with more power. The total police force in the country today is well over 7 lakhs. This strength has been multiplied over the years by addition of several hundred battalions of paramilitary forces like the Central Reserve Police, the Border Security Force, and the Central Industrial Security Force. Besides, there is the vast array of Homeguards and other similar organisations which these Governments deploy to meet their multifarious needs.

The expenditure of the Central and the State Governments on the police force has more than doubled in the last six or seven years. In 1976-77 this expenditure had risen to the level of around 700 crores of rupees. That was the period of the later half of Emergency, when Mrs. Gandhi's Government had geared the entire repressive apparatus of the State to swoop upon the slightest of discontent even against the authoritarian measures. It seemed as though the country had become a police State. The power of the police in terms of both muscular capacity and executive authority had swollen to unprecedented proportions and the budgetary provision for this force appeared to have reached its saturation point. But this record of the Congress Government led by Mrs. Gandhi was established only to be broken immediately thereafter by those who cry themselves hoarse over the police and administrative brutalities during Emergency, and who pledged before the people during campaign for vote at the last polls to restore, protect and extend civil liberty and democratic rights. But it now is for all to see how these 'crusaders' for the people's cause are steeping themselves busy strengthening the same police force with which Mrs. Gandhi's Government had run the steam-roller of its authoritarian rule on the people during Emergency. The Janata Government at the Centre and different States

increased the police budget last year as also this year for this purpose. And the Government which calls itself Left, the CPI(M) led Government in West Bengal, has outstripped all others in this regard. In the 1978-79 budget estimate of this State the allocation for the entire administration was Rs. 96 crores 98 lakhs. Out of this, Rs. 58 crores 54 lakhs had been earmarked for the police. It means, 60% of the expenditure for the administration is for the police alone. The corresponding figure of expenditure for the police in Maharashtra is 33%, Haryana 42%, Andhra Pradesh 43%, Tamil Nadu 44%, Orissa 46%, Punjab 52%, Kerala 52%, Rajasthan 54%, Bihar 56%, MP 57%, Gujarat 57%. Under its present 'Left Front' Government, West Bengal tops the list. In the budget estimate for the present year (1979-80), Rs. 63 crores 87 lakhs have been allocated for the police by the 'Left Front' Government. To this has to be added several other allocations under the heads provision for police (public works), provision for police (house building), etc. bringing the total allocation for the police to Rs. 68 crores 24 lakhs. Thus, in the 21 months of its rule this Government has increased the expenditure in the police account by Rs. 14 crores 36 lakhs over that of the previous Congress Government. Com. Debaprasad Sarkar, leader of our Party's group in the State Assembly, pointed out the anti-people

character of this police budget when he spoke against it.

It is interesting that the Congress, rather the Congresses, now in the Opposition, are vocal in opposing this sharp increase in the police budget. But only till two years back, they and those in the Janata Party who all were in the Congress and in the Government at that time, had been increasing the police budget every year. Is this then change of heart today? The CPI(M) and the other constituents of the present 'Left Front', who were then in the Opposition, used to charge the Congress for increasing the allocation in the police budget every year to strengthen this repressive arm of the State. In the twist and turn in the present parliamentary battle these parties have changed side, and each now speaks the other's language. Is not this apparent conflict between the Congress and the CPI(M) simply one due to the change in their relative position in the parliamentary politics?

It is significant that the CPI(M) offers the same justification today for its increasing the police budget successively, which the Congress had been offering when it was in the Government. Their first argument is the need to ensure 'law and order'. The Janata puts forth the same argument. The Congress (I) in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh uses the same logic. Sheikh Abdulla harps on the same theme in Jammu and Kashmir. So does the Power Ministry in Maharashtra. In fact, this is the foremost logic of every Government which makes it its business to protect the interest of the ruling capitalist class against that of the people. Without entering at this point into discussion on the nature of the ruling class's concept of 'law and order' and the role of the police in concretising this concept it will be sufficient

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Assam State Committee on the fratricidal strifes between the people of Assam and Nagaland

Assam State Committee of the SUCI while reviewing the present political situation in the State of Assam, in a resolution adopted during 4th-5th March last at Gauhati has strongly condemned the recent massacre at the Assam-Nagaland border. Expressing grave concern it said that it was the inevitable outcome of the policy of perpetuating the border conflict between the two states, both of which are integral parts of the country. This barbarous genocide, reminiscent of medieval

age, has no parallel in contemporary world history. This act of heinous crime has pointedly shown once again that despite tall talks, these bourgeois governments are, in fact, utterly callous and indifferent towards protecting the lives and properties of the common men. The Assam and the Union governments, despite being forewarned, has miserably failed to protect the lives of the people of the border region. The State Committee has demanded institution of

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W. B. State Committee urges the people to build up mass movements against power crisis

Calcutta April 11th: Comrade Sukomal Dasgupta, Secretary West Bengal State Committee SUCI, has in course of a statement, expressed grave concern about the horrible power crisis of the state:

"The horrible power crisis of the State, which is deteriorating very fast and the unthinkable callousness and all-pervading inaction of the 'Left Front' Government in such a grave situation has only brought to bold relief the grim reality how criminally negligent this government is towards so vital a problem of peoples' life.

"The situation has turned so grave that the West Bengal government

has directed the closure of all big industries for seven days, all shops and establishment to close within 7 P.M., all small factories, press etc. not to run after 5 P.M. This is going to further aggravate the miseries of the workers, the poor and the middle class people, apart from the hazards and harassments in their life due to power crisis which has become chronic now—as it would give a plea to employers for large scale retrenchment and layoff thus shifting the entire burden of the crisis on the workers. The previous Congress Governments no doubt aggravated the power problem by its utter

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Massive Increase in Police Budget—CPI(M) led 'Left Front' Government of West Bengal tops the list

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to point out here that these Governments all concede that the incidence of crime is rising everyday. What is the neat effect then? The police is said to be assigned the task of checking crime. The police budget is increased every year ostensibly to equip it for successfully discharging this duty. And the rate of incidence of crime is increasing in step with the budgetary increase, as if the two are directly proportional. Which part of this country is free from the tightening grip of criminals on the public life? Practically every metropolises, industrial towns and administrative centres have become a terror city. They are the breeding ground of criminals and the paradise for the latter's rampings. The picture is almost the same in the rural areas. Robbery, theft, loot, arson, wagon breaking, murder—all the crimes are of increasing daily occurrence. While moving the increased police budget for this year in the West Bengal Assembly, Mr. Jyoti Basu, the CPI(M) Chief Minister, admitted that there had been increase in crimes last year, some of the crimes assuming alarming proportions. Clearly, despite the increase in police budget last year, despite repeated shower of praise on this custodian of law and order, that is the police, by Mr. Basu and his party, incidence of crime has been registering increase during the last 21 months of their rule of the State. In the same breath and without missing an occasion, Mr. Basu and his party claim to have turned the State the best in 'law and order' situation, and to underline their claim they flaunt certificates from the monopolists and their mouth pieces. Can any one still doubt, after this unabashed public stand of the CPI(M) leaders, that by 'law and order' they mean something other than the issue

of increasing incidence of crimes?

A second question also arises here. With all the annual increase in police budget for modernisation of this force, for recruitment of larger number of personnel, and for providing better amenities to this contingent of force, the incidence of crimes is ever on the increase. Are not the miscreants committing their crimes on the public life within the full view of such a large contingent of police force? Is it not true that the criminals can carry on with their ramping just because the police is in collusion with them? When the CPI(M) was in the Opposition, Mr. Jyoti Basu and his party were most vocal in raising this public charge against the police and its former authority, the Congress Government. But now saddled in the governmental power, Mr. Basu and his party are too eloquent over what they call the commendable public service of the police. Mr. Basu has assigned to the police the task of upholding democracy. Today he does not as much as say that the 'Left Front' Government will implement its programme on the strength of its popular support. Instead he says: 'The Government would not be able to implement its programme without the police help'. (Statesman, 11.3.79.) Why the CPI(M) and its allies are depending so much on the police and what it precisely means when they say that West Bengal under their supervision has the best 'law and order' situation in the whole of country would go to explain why the 'Left Front' Government led by the CPI(M) has been increasing the police budget every year. In coming to this point however one should consider, in the first place, the public view of the role of the police in our country.

The people in our country have a singular

and unexceptionable view of the police: the police is the source of oppression and torture on the innocent. It is not the friend of the people, but their enemy as an organ in the hand of the ruling capitalist class which again shelters under its wings the miscreants. It is not their protector against the miscreants, but protector of the exploitative capitalist State apparatus. This image of the police has been cast deep in the mind of the people from experience in social life, and the stigma is actually an inheritance from the days of the British imperialist rule of this country. The police tradition is among the most hard-dying kind, and 31 years since Independence have not been able to shake it even. The methods of the police are too well-known. Arrest without warrant, keeping no record of arrests, detention without trial for long and unspecified period, application of the third degree method on the arrested, even killing of prisoners inside jails are its common practice. It is hardly necessary to point out that all these methods are totally illegal in terms of the statute books of the land. But this so-called 'Law-keeping Agency', has made violation of law a law unto itself. Under section 58 of the code of Criminal Procedure (1973), arrest of a person by the police has to be reported to the Judicial Magistrate. Under Section 57 of the same code, an arrested person cannot be detained for more than 24 hours in police custody in the absence of a special order from a Judicial Magistrate. Only a Judicial Magistrate can, from time to time, authorise detention of the accused in police custody for a term not exceeding 15 days. Under the code no undertrial prisoner can be kept in prison for more than 60 days, if his case is not taken up before the

court. But all these provisions are being daily violated by the police. At the other end of this law enforcing system are the magistrates who respond to this violation simply by preferring to overlook the illegal acts of the 'Law-keepers'. It is a measure of credit to this system that about 17 lakhs of undertrial prisoners, including political prisoners, are languishing in the jails of the country. It has been said with concrete evidences that in some cases the period of detention of the undertrials exceed the period of sentence that could be imposed on them if they were convicted of the offences they have been charged with.

All the parliamentary parties, from the Congress and the Janata to the CPI(M), have been crying themselves hoarse over the need to ensure 'the rule of law'. At the sight of every gathering legitimate democratic movement they all threaten that violation of law would not be tolerated. But their much admired custodian of law and order not only maintains collusion with the criminals, but spares no occasion to torture and harass the common people and the workers of the legitimate democratic mass movements by resorting to the whole range of illegal methods. The police in our country is not bound by any democratic norm and code of conduct expected of this organisation in a civilised, self-respecting, sovereign country. The savage and lawless conduct of the police had led one of the protagonists of 'the rule of law', Justice A. N. Mullha of Uttar Pradesh High Court, to observe: 'There is not a single lawless group in the whole country, whose record of crime anywhere nears the record of the organised unit which is known as the Indian Police Force.'

This Indian Police Force was raised as a highly centralised Law-keeping Agency by the British rulers to perpetuate their imperialist grip on the country. The

rulers had set before this force as its object not service to the people but coercion and tyranny over the people in order to subjugate them. It was in fact an imperialist agency raised and reared to crush the democratic aspirations of the people and their freedom movement. After Independence the bourgeoisie which usurped the power retained this character and structure of the Indian Police Force, since it was afraid of the anti-capitalist revolutionary aspirations of the people and their legitimate democratic movements. So, to the people of the country, the police remained an autocratic, tyrannical and brutal force no better than a gang of organised criminals in uniform. Because of this anti-democratic, anti-people and criminal character of the police and its utilisation by the ruling class and party to subserve nakedly their interests, the administrative neutrality in the police administration turned out to be a mockery. In the natural course, corruption permeated through every organ of the police, the unholy alliance with the criminals flourished to reach newer heights and the prime business of this coercive arm of the State continued in its imperialist tradition—to crush the legitimate democratic mass movements and serve the interest of the ruling class and its party.

This police tradition continued unabated during the entire Congress regime, and is thriving under the present Governments. Of course, the extreme alienation of the police force from the people had forced Mr. Charan Singh, when he was the Home Minister at the Centre, to comment: 'The police remained an agency designed to intimidate, deter and punish.' (Indian Express, 15.8.77) A seasoned bureaucrat like Mr. Dharma Vira, at present chairman of the National Police Commission, also observed the other day: 'In the police we had yet to come out

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from imperialism to democracy.' He also said that the police had got used to the practice of working according to the wishes of the ruling party in a way that they had become really the servants of the Government and not of law. 'The problem now was how to make the police the servants of the law.' (Amrita Bazar Patrika, 26.12.78). But while the high functionaries consider it expedient to make such comments sometimes, the police savagery under the Janata Government has been tumbling all previous records. The ferocious and brutal action of the police in quelling the legitimate democratic movements in Bailadilla, Bokaro, Panthnagar and elsewhere in the recent past remind the people that the present Government does not differ in the least from its predecessor in maintaining the police force as the steel hand to crush the people's movements.

But this is not true for the Janata Government, the CPI(M) is equally eager to prove its ability on this score.

The CPI(M) seems to be in serious competition with the Janata and the Congress to prove its single-minded devotion to ensure 'the rule of law'. The Government led by it in West Bengal deployed a whole army of police to crush the movement of electricity workers in Santaldih. It applied the same brutal force to evict the refugees from Dandakaranya and even kill these people at Kashipur and later at Marichjhanpi after these hapless stragglers had resisted the Government's revengeful onslaughts and economic blockade. In fact, ever since it had been installed in power after the last Assembly polls, this 'Left Front' Government has been cracking down on every legitimate democratic mass movement and that is how it is ensuring 'law and order'. The police had severely beaten up demonstrating medical students in Calcutta last year. The police made indiscriminate lathi-charge and arrested

Strengthening police system a coercive instrument at the hands of the capitalist state machine is to strengthen the ruling class against the people

a large number of demonstrators when people in Siliguri had launched a movement after the Government had paid no heed to their protest against the arbitrary increase of busfare two months back. The police opened fire the other day on the demonstrators at the Sealdah Station (Calcutta), who were protesting against the late running of trains and the absolute chaos in train service; a man was killed in the firing and several others were injured. These are but few examples illustrating the police brutality under the present 'Left Front' Government. But that is not all. Mr. Jyoti Basu said, while he moved the police budget this year, that 'police will not act in partisan manner'. To prove his point of the police impartiality, the Chief Minister said that a large number of CPI(M) supporters had been arrested. This may be a frank confession on the part of Mr. Basu that the public charge of criminal acts against the CPI(M) workers is true, but does it really prove the impartial character of the police? Only a few weeks back CPI(M) workers made a dastardly attack on our party workers at Satgachia, the present constituency of Mr. Jyoti Basu, when our workers were holding a street corner meeting. A complaint was duly lodged with the police, but no action has so far been taken. A few days back CPI(M) workers raided a meeting of our party and later also raided the houses of some of our workers in a village of Midnapur wounding even women members of those families. The police has refused to admit FIR even arrested our workers who went to register the FIR. Last year our party workers in Behala were attacked by the CPI(M) in collusion with the local police authority. One of our workers was locked in police custody on a fabricated charge of murder.

Repeated protests were made, but in vain. Incidents of the kind are taking place in every district, but nowhere the police takes any action against the CPI(M) miscreants, and in most cases does not even admit the FIR. Everybody knows that the main enemy of the poor people in villages is the police-jotedar-vested interest combine. But has the 'Left Front' Government taken any step to break this combine in its 'Operation Barga'? The evil combine thrives as before and the police is carrying on undeterred along with its old practice. Experience during the Congress regime has been that the police first arrests the toiling people and the workers of the legitimate democratic movements, particularly those who conduct movement from a revolutionary outlook and then think out which charges to be made against them and fabricate those charges. Frequently the fabricated charges are made under non-bailable sections so that the victims cannot get themselves freed on bail. This habit and method of the police have not changed in the least under the 'Left Front' Government. Instances can be multiplied to show how the police under the CPI(M)-led 'Left Front' Government has been acting in the most partisan manner to serve the interests of the ruling class and the CPI(M). It is clear from the attitude of the bureaucrats and the police officers at all levels that the bureaucratic administration and police have fostered a clear understanding with the CPI(M).

It should be recalled that during the days of the second UF Government in West Bengal when the police department was in charge of the CPI(M), the administration and the police had maintained a similar close link and understanding with the CPI(M). Mr. Jyoti Basu used to speak then in the

same eulogising terms on the role of the police as he does now and the police had been backing the CPI(M) in the same way as it does now. But the relation between the two has clearly grown more intimate and more mature this time right from the beginning. Mr. Jyoti Basu reposes his confidence in the police calling it one of the standard bearers of democracy, and he does so at the same time he uses the police to crush the legitimate democratic mass movements. So, it is not at all difficult to see that by 'law and order' Mr. Basu and his party actually mean their concern for keeping the interests of the ruling capitalist class and the Government free from the pressure of legitimate democratic mass movements. This is why the CPI(M) leaders look upon the police as an important organ in their hand and that is the reason for their keen concern in increasing the police budget and praising the role of the police. But whom is the CPI(M) really strengthening in this way—the coercive arm of the State or the people's legitimate movements?

On many a occasion, particularly at the time of the crisis in the United Front Governments in Kerala and West Bengal in 1969-70, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, our great leader, teacher and guide, pointed to the serious consequences of this attitude of the CPI(M) to the police. He pointed out that during the Congress regime the bureaucratic administration and the police, through their service of the Congress, had turned themselves into object of hatred of the people. Although the anti-people and anti-democratic conduct, behaviour, attitude and outlook of these organs of the bourgeois State have not changed in the least, the CPI(M)'s certificate of good performance and progressive role has only confused the people and helped these organs in gaining

a pro-people image. Despite all the medal awards by the Congress to the police for 'public service', the police had not been able to ward off public hatred. But the CPI(M)'s certificate gives it now the status of public servant. This is the invaluable gain of the police from the 'revolutionary' CPI(M).

The CPI(M) leaders now argue that the police as an organisation should not be looked upon as that bad since there are common people in its ranks and there are honest officers too in it. By shrewdly posing the question in this way the CPI(M) leaders are confusing the people as regards the real character of the police as an organ in the hand of the ruling capitalist class. But is it a question of some good or bad individuals, or a question of a system; an organ, a vital and integral part of the capitalist state machine organised with a particular orientation and a particular character to subserve the ruling class in the best possible manner? Does the presence of common people in any organisation give it, *ipso facto*, a pro-people character? All the bourgeois institutions and even the army of the bourgeois State have one or other kind of association of some of the common people. Does that give the bourgeois institutions and the bourgeois army pro-people character? In the opinion of the CPI(M) leaders it perhaps gives. But opinions as this have no iota of Marxist class concept and approach in them. Rather they reflect the bourgeois class concept and approach.

Because of this concept and approach, the CPI(M)-led Government is so vocal about 'law and order'. The CPI(M) does not view the issue of legitimate democratic mass movements from the angle of the people's interests. Instead, it views these movements from the angle of legality. Comrade Shibdas Ghosh taught us that the structure of 'law and order' in the present capitalist system is conducive to the rule of the

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Not on peoples' support but on coercive organs all these governments want to survive

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capitalist class. The capitalist system and the capitalist state stand today as the greatest stumbling block in the road to social progress. So the prevailing sense of justice, morals and values in society which form the basis of the present law and order has become a privilege in the hands of the ruling capitalist class to perpetuate its exploitative and oppressive rule. No genuinely progressive man can allow himself to be guided by the sense of social injustice which this law and order protects. **Comrade Ghosh** also pointed out that whenever a change was urgently called for in the interest of social progress and from the principles of legitimacy, but the said change went against the bourgeois class interest, the bourgeois democrats invariably raised the hue and cry that to be legitimate it must conform to legality. Otherwise, in their opinion, the concept of 'law and order' had no meaning. It should be realised that to depend on law, and law alone, in a capitalist society would not deliver good to the people. 'Because whatever is legal is not necessarily justified, moral and humanistic. It is more true in a capitalist society of the present day where order has become injustice.' On the basis of this concept and approach **Comrade Shibdas Ghosh** laid down the yardstick to judge whether a Government, which ever name it may call itself by, is genuinely pro-people and Left or not. The real issue to be decided is whether the Government in question is acting as a faithful agent of the capitalist State, as did the Congress Government, or is trying to help the growth of organised legitimate democratic mass movements against capitalism. The

fundamental or qualitative difference between a Government run by a bourgeois party and one by a genuinely Left party or front lies in their respective attitude to the legitimate democratic mass movements of the people. Only by adopting the policy that the police shall not interfere in legitimate democratic movements and by restraining the administration and the police on the basis of this policy, can a Government really proceed to deliver good to the people.

But what do we witness today in the country? All the parliamentary parties, whether in Governmental power at the Centre or at the States, whether the Janata and the Congress or the CPI(M), are cracking down on the legitimate democratic mass movements using the brutal police force. For this reason, all the Governments run by these parties are increasing the police budget, swelling the police strength and eulogising the police role. Whatever their public utterances regarding civil liberty and democratic rights, whether they opposed or supported Emergency, whatever political jargons may they use for public consumption—all these parties sail in the same boat. The CPI(M) in its bid to earn the credibility of the ruling capitalist class as tough 'administrator' and dependable caretaker of the bourgeois State machine and find thereby a berth in the ruling class's design to install the two party parliamentary system is trying hard to prove its mettle.

It should therefore be borne in mind by all who are keen to fight for restoration, protection and extension of democratic rights that democratic rights and norms can be restored and pro-

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callousness but the 'Left Front' Government is in power for almost two years now. The situation, instead of improving, has deteriorated further and there is no hope of an improvement in the near future.

"Why such a devastating situation developed, why the 'Left Front' government did not take any serious step towards solving such a vital problem of peoples' life excepting trying to pass over the responsibility on to the workers the common people have the right to demand an explanation.

tected only through organised legitimate democratic mass movements. Even a pro-people reform in the present order must be backed by legitimate democratic mass movements for successful implementation. Those who talk of democracy, progress and people's interest must stand in defence of the people's legitimate movements even if it oversteps the prevailing concept of legality. Otherwise democracy loses its relevance and means in reality an unabashed advocacy for the existing exploitative capitalist order and a shameless defence of the bourgeois concept of law or legality without any concern for whether it meets the ends of legitimacy or not.

It should be realised that strengthening the police means strengthening the repressive apparatus of the State and that eulogising the role of police means deceiving the people about the class character of this bourgeois State organ. The people can defeat this policy of the defenders of the interests of the ruling capitalist class only through organised legitimate democratic mass movements. That is the only way.

ACUTE POWER CRISIS

We urge upon all sections of common people to come forward to build up an organised movement against the all-out crisis of people's life particularly against power

crisis, soaring prices and non-availability of essential commodities, the mounting burden of taxation, i.e. against the non-left policies of the 'Left Front' Government of the State.

Assam State Committee on Fratricidal Border Strife

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a high-power judicial enquiry committee without any further loss of time. It also demanded adequate compensation for the deceased as well as wounded persons, proper rehabilitation for the destitutes and suitable security arrangement for the people of the border region. Also, Expressing its grave concern at the growing conflicts on border issue between Assam and its neighbouring states, it appealed for its peaceful solution in an atmosphere of friendship and cordiality.

The State Committee expressed its grave concern on the problem of growing unemployment, near stagnation of economy of all industrially backward state like Assam and on the ever increasing numbers of cases of retrenchment of workers in different parts of the state. The resolution further added that the newly installed Janata Government at the state has not only miserably failed to take any initiative and execute any concrete and comprehensive plan towards establishment of newer industrial units, but also like its much hated predecessor Congress governments, was consistently pursuing an anti-people, anti-labour industrial policy.

Moreover, the state Committee expressed its great dismay at the manner in which the Janata government at the State was indiscriminately harrasing the Indian citizens and driving them out of the state in the name of expulsion of outsiders, and observed that without going through the process of court of law, the government—have no right—constitutional or otherwise—to determine the citizenship of any person held in disputes and to extradite him from the country. Raising its strongest voice of protest against this sort of oppression of the Indian citizens the resolution demanded immediate stoppage of this practice. The State Committee further observed that in the recently held Panchayat and Gauhati's Municipal elections it has been proved beyond doubt that the people of the state were rapidly getting disillusioned about the Janata Party and the two wings of the Congress.

The resolution gave an ardent call to all the genuine left and democratic parties and forces to come forward to develop united front of genuine left and democratic parties and forces in the greater interest of the toiling people.

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